

IN THE CLAIMS

The pending claims, including amended and new claims, are as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A method of closing an open end of a ~~product~~ ribbed thermoplastic panel having a first layer with a first end and a second layer with a second end, the first layer being spaced apart from the second layer by a rib interconnected therewith, the first and second ends defining ~~an~~ the open end of ~~the product~~, the first and second layers being heat weldable or fusable, the method comprising steps of:

rolling at least the first layer along a surface toward the second layer and ~~contracting~~ contacting the first layer with the second layer;

fusing the first and second layers by heating at least one of a portion of the first layer that ~~contact~~ contacts the second layer and a portion of the second layer that contacts the first layer to form a closed end extending proximate an edge of the ribbed thermoplastic panel and to define a space between the rib and the closed end.

2. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the rolling step includes overlapping the first layer over the second layer.

3. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein the rolling step includes contacting an edge of the first layer to an edge of the second layer.

4. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein the rolling step includes rolling both the first and second layers so that edges of the first and second layers contact each other.

5. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 4, wherein the edges abut each other.

6. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the rolling step includes rolling both the first and second layers so that the first layer overlaps and contacts the second layer.

7. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein the fusing step includes heating ~~both~~ portions of both the first and second layers that contact each other.
8. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 7, wherein the ~~both~~ portions of both the first and second layers that contact each other are simultaneously heated.
9. (Original) A method according to claim 2, further including a step of trimming at least the second layer so that the first layer extends beyond the second layer to form a tab, the tab being dimensioned to overlap the second layer.
10. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 4, further including a step of trimming the first and second layers so that the first and second layers extend substantially equally.
11. (Original) A method according to claim 6, further including a step of trimming the first and second layers so that the first and second layers extend substantially equally.
12. (Original) A method according to claim 1, further including a step of pressing and cooling the fused layers.
13. (Canceled)
14. (Currently amended) A method according to claim ~~13~~ 1, wherein the ribbed thermoplastic panel is formed of a material is one of selected from the group consisting of polypropylene, polyethylene, and polycarbonate.
15. (Withdrawn) The panel produced according to the method of claim 13.

Claims 16-30 (Canceled)

31. (New) A method of closing an open end of a corrugated thermoplastic panel having a first layer with a first free end and a second layer with a second free end, the first layer being spaced from the second layer by a rib extending therebetween, the first and second free ends defining a first open end, and the first and second layers being heat sealable to each other, the method comprising:

guiding the first free end along a surface so that a first portion of the first layer bends and abuts a second portion of the second layer;

heat sealing the abutting first and second portions to each other to form a closed end extending proximate an edge of the corrugated thermoplastic panel and to define a space between the rib and the closed end.

32. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein the rib defines a spacing and the first and second portions overlap at a position along the spacing.

33. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein the corrugated thermoplastic panel comprises a second open end disposed opposite the first open end, the first free end is guided so that the first portion extends toward the second open end, and the first and second portions overlap.

34. (New) The method of claim 31, further comprising:

trimming the second layer to have a second length defined between the rib and the second free end;

wherein the first layer has a first length defined between the rib and the first free end, and the second length is shorter than the first length.

35. (New) The method of claim 31, further comprising:

guiding the second free end so that the second portion bends.

36. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein heat for the heat sealing is provided by an electrical heating element.

37. (New) A method of closing an open end of a thermoplastic panel having a first layer with a first free end and a second layer with a second free end, the first layer being spaced from the second layer by a member extending therebetween, the first and second free ends defining a first open end, the first and second layers being heat sealable to each other, and the thermoplastic panel further having a plurality of interior open regions, the method comprising:

guiding the first free end along a surface so that a first portion of the first layer bends and abuts a second portion of the second layer;

heat sealing the abutting first and second portions to each other to form a closed end extending proximate an edge of the thermoplastic panel and to define a space between the member and the closed end.

38. (New) The method of claim 37, wherein the member defines a spacing between the first and second layers and the first and second portions overlap at a position along the spacing.

39. (New) The method of claim 37, wherein the thermoplastic panel comprises a second open end disposed opposite the first open end, the first free end is guided so that the first portion extends toward the second open end, and the first and second portions overlap.

40. (New) The method of claim 37, further comprising:
trimming the second layer to have a second length defined between the member and the second free end;
wherein the first layer has a first length defined between the member and the first free end, and the second length is shorter than the first length.

41. (New) The method of claim 37, further comprising:
guiding the second free end so that the second portion bends.

42. (New) The method of claim 37, wherein heat for the heat sealing is provided by an electrical heating element.